

Community Renews Dialog With Local Government Challenge

Ayu residents, ethnic Turks living in an isolated village of a predominantly ethnically Uzbek district of Kyrgyzstan, were very distrustful of local government authorities. Perceived mishandling of land distribution and land access issues strained this relationship, and the paltry government contribution to the rehabilitation of Ayu's school (less than \$20 compared to the economically deprived community's contribution of \$4,000) further exacerbated the situation.



Photo: CAIP Kyrgyzstan Staff

Ayu schoolchildren move furniture into their refurbished school building.

“These people [council officials] are our people. We have elected them. This is the time to demonstrate their commitment to us by working together on this community-led project.”

- Ayu Resident

Results

The local government contributed nearly \$4000 in cash and materials toward the road rehabilitation, which represents the largest assistance package that the village has ever received from its local government. Ayu now has a re-furnished and repaired village school, and will soon have a newly rehabilitated road. This road project will serve to make Ayu less isolated and neglected, and therefore less distrustful -- they not only have easier access to the main roads, they also now have a healthier relationship with their elected officials.

Initiative

The USAID-funded Community Action Investment Program (CAIP) works with communities vulnerable to conflict by helping them identify and resolve localized sources of tension. Ayu residents had been in a long-running conflict with their local government officials, and CAIP created opportunities for dialog to bridge the rift between them.

Ayu's residents gained a great deal of confidence through the school project to which their local government had contributed so meagerly. After its completion, CAIP helped the Ayu community members in organizing a new series of meetings with local government officials to discuss their responsibilities to Ayu constituency, and the severity of transport problems in their area.

Ayu's representatives outlined their detailed plans for road rehabilitation, which they knew would require a much greater share of government support than they had been able to secure in the past. Developing a constructive relationship which they had built through their dialog paid off.